A N

E S S A Y

To State the

SCRIPTURE-ACCOUNT

OF

MAN's REDEMPTION,

BY THE

DEATH of *CHRIST.*

WHEREIN

The DOCTRINE is ſhewn to be as PLAIN and INTELLIGIBLE, as it is USEFUL and IMPORTANT.

Caleb Fleming.

Write the viſion, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. Hab. ii. 2.

— *And the bread that I will give, is my fleſh, which I will give for the* Life *of the world.* John vi. 51.

— *God's grace — is now made manifeſt by the appearing of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who hath aboliſhed death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the Goſpel.* 2 Tim. i. 10.

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Short Instructions to the Reader.

THE numberless volumes *which have been wrote on the subject of* man's redemption, *will be a vindication, or apology for the publication of this* short treatise. *Especially, if it should be found to have rendered those bulky performances useless. Many enquiring persons have been dissatisfied with what has been heretofore written on the subject: and if this should contribute to give the rational and impartial Examiner any satisfaction, a desirable end will be obtained.*

All such who read the following Essay, may easily perceive, that it is formed upon no human scheme whatsoever; and that the author of it has paid no regard to any one of the fallible systems; no, not to those which are under the venerable name of orthodox.

He has kept as close a regard to the revelation *as he was able: and hath had no manner of temptation to depart, in the least tittle, from what has appeared to him to be the doctrine of it. The reason of his not collecting* all the texts, *on the subject, was, he thought that a* few *of the strongest expressions clearly reconciled, would be a sufficient* specimen; *and prevent too great an enlargement of the Essay.* Brevity *must become a* plain *subject. The author has chosen to* conceal *his name, for several reasons.--Nevertheless, in his* religious *enquiries, he courts no man's favour, nor is in fear of any man's displeasure. This, he reckons* more

than needful to answer those questions, who is he? *and* what is he? *Nor will a mind form'd by Truth, think it of any moment, whether he be a Conformist, or a Non-conformist; a North, or a South Briton, or of Hibernian extract.* Truth *is* truth, *tho' it should drop from the Pen of a* Turk! *and he who gives* truth *the most generous reception, will make her welcome, tho' in the garb of a* Barbarian-Stranger. *He could have made some* inferences, *which would have much concerned the conduct of Christian men towards one another: but he has chosen to omit an* application, *which is the duty of every man to make for himself: being assured, that if men are honest, and in earnest Christians, they will not fail to make those reflexions upon themselves that a* mistaken *and* enflamed *zeal has made salutary and needful.*

Only one *such inference he cannot forbear; and that is, the amazing insolence of those writers, who brand with* heretical *names, any such, who think differently from them on the* doctrine of redemption: *yea, even presume to unchristianize those who receive it not in the* dress *of such an age, or in the* shape *of such a party! when, at the same time, no man can have any worthy ideas of the doctrine, who has not formed them by the light of revelation, since it is a doctrine of pure revelation. And if every man is to judge for himself of the doctrines of revelation, who shall be able to sit in judgment upon him, but the final judge?--Break thro' this right of private judgment, and defend Protestantism if you are able.*

THE

Doctrine of Redemption, plain and intelligible, as important, &c.

SECT. I.

THE *variety* or *diverſity* of opinion, *which men* have invented about the DEATH of *Jeſus Chriſt*, muſt have been owing *chiefly* to the not confining of the attention to the New Teſtament doctrine, and to the want of comparing carefully the ſeveral repreſentations which are therein given of its deſign or intention.

This truly muſt be the ſtate of the caſe, foraſmuch as it is there deſcribed as an event in which *all* men are concerned: and therefore muſt be a *plain* and *clear* doctrine in proportion to the *importance* of it. To ſuppoſe any doctrine *obſcure* that concerns mankind, in the *laſt* and *moſt complete* revelation of the mind and will of GOD, is to reflect great diſhonour upon it, and upon the wiſdom and grace of the Revealer. In *former* diſpenſations it might be expected, that we ſhould find *prophecies* relating to the *laſt*, which had ſome obſcurity; and only vaniſhed upon the accompliſhment of them. Hence it is, that *one* of the New Teſtament writers, upon taking a review of the virtuous influence that prior revelations had had upon good men, yet adds, *that they had not received*

the promiſe, or ſeen it in its moſt clear and extenſive point of view, *God having provided, or foreſeen ſome better Thing for us; that they without us ſhould not be made perfect*, Heb. xi. 39, 40. Hence Chriſtians are ſaid, *with open face, to behold as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord!* the eye has the utmoſt aſſiſtance given it, that this ſtate will admit of.--And of the perſpicuity of this revelation, mention is made in antient prophecy; *the way-faring-men, tho' Fools*, that is, perſons either of very ſmall natural capacity, or perſons who had been, *fooliſh, diſobedient*, and *deceived*, under the corruptions of natural or revealed religion; men, tho' *fools, ſhould not err*. And that ſuch ſhould be the increaſe of light, and the means of knowledge, *that all men ſhould know the Lord from the leaſt to the greateſt*.

Accordingly, when the bleſſed Jeſus addreſſes the Jews, in a manner that intends to ſhew the benefit which his doctrine was calculated to impart to men, he calls it, *the light! Light is come into the world*. And that he was the *way*, and the *truth*, and the *life*.

Thus evident is it, that if we allow the New Teſtament Writings to be the laſt and finiſhed revelation of the mind and will of God, concerning man in this ſtate, or that will be made to him during this ſtate, it will follow, that there can be *no obſcurity* in any of its doctrines, in which the preſent inſtruction of man is concerned. But the *death of Jeſus Chriſt* is often repreſented

repreſented as an event in which man has an important concern; and not only ſo, but as an event that *prophecy* and *ſacrifice* foretold and prefigur'd.

§ II. The *Death of Chriſt* muſt not only have a *plain* and *intelligible* doctrine relative to man, as far as he is concerned in it, but it muſt be perfectly conſiſtent with the moſt exalted and perfect Ideas that man can form of God. One of which Ideas is this, *namely*, that he is abſolutely *unchangeable* in his nature, or perfections. See *John* iv. 24. viii. 44, 46. *Rom.* iii. 4. *Heb.* vi. 18. *Jam.* i. 17. It cannot then be, that any notions which men have formed concerning the death of Chriſt, repugnant to the idea of his *unchangeableneſs* can be juſt or right notions of this event. But all ſuch repreſentation of it, as appeaſing, propitiating or reconciling, an unappeaſed, an unpropitious, an irreconciled God, does imply *change* in Deity; and of conſequence, deſtroys the moſt perfect and adoreable idea we can form of our Maker. But nothing can be more abſurd than the imagination, that the death of Chriſt, can have any ſuch reſpect to Deity as to imply a *change* in his nature, will, or perfection. Neither does the New Teſtament ever repreſent the Death of Chriſt as reconciling God to Men, but as reconciling men to God, *Rom.* v. 8. 1 *Cor.* v. 18, 19. 1 *John* iv. 10. *John* iii. 16. and numbers of other Paſſages.

§ III. The

§ III. The *Death of Chriſt* muſt have a doctrine ariſing from it, not only plain and intelligible, ſo far as it concerns man, and every way conſiſtent with the abſolute unchangeableneſs of God, but it muſt alſo be perfectly conſiſtent with God's moral government; and therefore, cannot be intended to *relax* or *weaken* the obligation men are under to *moral rectitude*. See the ſermon on the mount; all the inſtructions of Jeſus, and of his Apoſtles; particularly, *Matth.* v. 17, 18. God's being *unchangeable* in his being, nature, and will, muſt lead us to conclude, that no one of his appointments, can in the leaſt alter the moral obligations of any of his creatures. Nay, ſuch is the nature of truth, or of moral obligation, that it muſt be eternally immutable, and cannot alter at the pleaſure of any being. For altho' it was at the *good pleaſure* of God, that he brought man into being, yet it was not in his power to make him reaſonable and intelligent, and capable of moral character, without the obligations of reaſon, intelligence, and truth. Or, he could not make a creature, the produce of his own perfect wiſdom, power and goodneſs, and at the ſame time ſet him free from the firſt obligations of a creature to its Creator. It could not then be in the power of God, or in his pleaſure, to make any poſitive appointment, that ſhall remove, or abate, or leſſen the force of moral obligation on man, conſidered as an accountable being.

ing. The death of Chriſt cannot then be an event, pre-ordained of God, that can, in the leaſt, weaken man's obligation to moral rectitude. For,

§ IV. If the *three* foregoing premiſſes can be ſupported, or be allowed as firſt-principles, then it will alſo appear an evident truth, that the *obedience*, *virtue*, or *piety* expreſſed in the death of Chriſt, cannot, in the eye of truth, or in the eſtimate of the God of truth, be regarded as *any other's* obedience, virtue or piety; but only as *his* whoſe death expreſſed ſuch obedience, virtue or piety.--All ſuch notions therefore, which repreſent the imputation of that obedience, virtue or piety, as the obedience, *&c.* of another, or as *transferable* to another, are falſe, and incapable of defence. For ſo long as there is an eſſential, eternal, unalterable difference between truth and falſehood, ſo long it will be impoſſible that the God of truth, can reckon that *action* or *ſuffering* mine, in which another perſon was alone concerned, and of the virtue or piety of which, that ſingle perſon can alone be conſcious.--Nor is it poſſible that the virtue, merit, or rewardibility of the action or ſuffering, of any one being, can become the virtue, merit, or rewardibility of another, whoſe action or ſuffering it was not: for to ſuppoſe this, is to ſuppoſe a *change* in the nature and relation of things: foraſmuch as the virtue and rewardibility of an action, would not remain relative to the action, or to him who performed it, but to

another, who had no conſciouſneſs at all of performing the action, but who plainly perceived it was not his action, but the action of another.

§ V. The final reward of good men, with that gift of God, *eternal life*, cannot then be conſidered, as the reward of Chriſt's death and obedience; for as much as this would be to confound and deſtroy the relation of things: becauſe *reward* would be conferred as the reſult of *arbitrary will*, and not regulated by truth or reaſon, or the relation of things; and the *reaſon* of the reward would then as well extend to one man as to another. For if the death of Chriſt be conſidered as the *reaſon* of the reward, the virtue of one man, and the vice of another man makes no difference. But a Being who confers reward on one man, on that reaſon, may as well confer it on another man, on the ſame reaſon. So that it is but ſuppoſing God to be as *weak* as he is *arbitrary*, in receding from the relation of things, and we may be aſſured, that his making the death of Chriſt, the *reaſon* of his conferring eternal-life on any one man, it may as well become the reaſon of his conferring eternal life upon another. But if it ſhould be ſaid, that the virtue and piety of one man makes it *more fit*, that God ſhould confer the gift of eternal-life upon him, than it ever can be, that he ſhould confer the ſame favour on another who is vitious and impious, then it will follow, that the *reaſon* of conferring eternal-life, does

does not lie in the death of Jesus, but in the virtue and piety of men, which constitute the *fitness*. For if God regards *fitness* in bestowing his favours, then he is governed by *truth*; but if he does so, then the *reason* of conferring eternal-life, must lie in the subject on which it is conferred, and not in another, who is not the subject.

But God is a God of *truth* as well as of *mercy*, and his holiness will not suffer him to violate truth in the conferring of his favours; therefore he must regard *personal fitness* or *unfitness*: and if so, then eternal-life cannot be conferred by him on any man on account of Christ's death, or of his obedience, as the *reason* of it. Moreover, *eternal-life*, conferr'd on man, cannot be the *purchase* of Christ's death; because it is the *gift* of God.--*Death* is the wages of sin, but eternal-life is not called the *wages* of Christ's death, *Rom.* vi. 23. No; but it is the *gift* of God, the effect of *free* favour.--But if the purchase, or wages of Christ's death, there would then have been a *price* paid to God for it: which single consideration would destroy the *grace* and *favour* of it; it could no longer be the *gift* of God.--Moreover, this *gift* is truly said to be, *in Christ Jesus our Lord.*--But then, this does by no means infer, that it is less the *gift* of God, because conferred thro' the Mediation of Christ.--The *gift* reaches us, as it is the result of our being raised from the dead, which is to be effected by our Lord Jesus Christ; and with

great propriety, eternal-life is said to be the *gift* of God, in or by Jesus Christ.

This gives a grand opening into the next proposition, *viz.*

§ VI. The *death of Christ*, as the doctrine of it lies in the New Testament, must be an event of *great importance* to mankind.

We are now to examine into the *reason* of the death of Christ, and in what respects man may be said to receive *advantage* by it. And in doing this, we shall endeavour to keep clear of all prejudices from human schemes; pay no manner of regard to any human authorities; but pursue the directions of Revelation, and follow no other light but that, as far as *reason* will enable, to find out the sense and meaning of the doctrine.

REASON I. The *reason* of the death of Christ, appears, by revelation to be, *the death of man.* In the history of the first-human-pair, *Gen.* iii. 15--20. the sentence upon the first offence, is *death*, *dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.*--Death must take place upon Adam and all his descendants, in order to regulate their desires and affections towards sensitive enjoyments, which was threatned to *Adam* even in his paradisaical state, *Gen.* ii. 17. So that *death* was not excluded from the idea of man in his state of innocency: for he was told, that *in the day that he eat of the fruit, he should surely die.*

His

His eating confirm'd the ſentence, and man is removed from the tree of life.--*Adam* becomes the parent of a race of mortal creatures. So that as the natural head, or common father of men, *all* are ſaid to *ſin*, that is, in the common language of the Jews, to *die* in him: for ſo *ſin* is put for the conſequence of ſin, *Gen.* iv. 7. God ſays to Cain, if thou doſt not well, *ſin lieth at the door*, i. e. the *demerit* of ſin: the *doing not well, was the ſin*; what awaited the not doing well, is the *demerit*, or *conſequence* of it. So *Gen.* xix. 15. The Angels bid *Lot* haſten out of *Sodom*, leſt he be conſumed *in the iniquity of the city*, i. e. in the *puniſhment* of the city's ſin or iniquity. *Lev.* xx. 20. And if a man lie with his uncle's wife, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedneſs; *they ſhall bear their ſin.*--How is this to be born? Why, *they ſhall die childleſs.* Here ſin intends, in the very letter of this law, *puniſhment*. *Again*, the children of Iſrael are threatned upon their idolatries, that they ſhall bear their *iniquities* forty years, *Numb.* xiv. 34.

Theſe are paſſages very ſufficient to ſhew the uſe of the term, *ſin*, or *iniquity*; and prove that it did ſignify very uſually in the Jewiſh idiom, the *demerit* or *conſequence* of ſin. And in this, and no other ſenſe can *all* men be ſaid to have ſinned in Adam, ſee *Rom.* v. 12. as by *one* man ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin; and ſo death hath paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned, that is, died in Adam, or be-

come mortal in him. So that, the ſin by which death entred, or came upon all men, was the ſingle offence, of a ſingle, individual man, Adam; and cannot therefore, with truth, be affirm'd of more than *one*.--All the deſcendants of Adam, have, to a man, been *incapable* of his perſonal guilt in the one offence, that confirm'd the ſentence of mortality, [or, if you will, gave it place in fact,] foraſmuch as no one of his family appear to have begun their exiſtence, when Adam eat the forbidden fruit; and many of Adam's deſcendants, who have been ſubjected to death, have never been capable of any ſin at all. *For example*, thoſe infants who have died before they could put on moral character.

All, ſinning in Adam, muſt intend, *all* becoming ſubject to mortality in Adam. And with this agrees, 1 *Cor.* xv. 22. *As in Adam all die.*

That the death of all men, through the offence of one, is the *reaſon* of the death of Chriſt, ſeems evidently to be the true ſtate of the caſe, from *all* the revelations.

So, if the *promiſe*, made to our firſt parents, has any intelligible meaning, *viz.* that *the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the head of the ſerpent*, Gen. iii. 15. it muſt intend this *recovery* from death, as in this lies the weight of the Sentence, ver. 19. *For duſt thou art, and unto duſt thou ſhalt return.*--In confirmation of which doctrine of man's recovery from death, the language

language of all the *ſacrifices* of ſlain beaſts, appears to have typified or ſhadowed-out a *ſacrifice* that ſhould deſtroy the force and dominion of death, and remove it from the human-family. The ceaſing of ſacrifice, bloody ſacrifice among Jews and Gentiles, upon the univerſal ſpread of the Goſpel, ſeems to confirm this opinion of ſacrifices. And the opinion has not, that I have ever read or heard, been confuted, or expoſed to contempt.

Moſt certainly this is the doctrine our bleſſed Lord gives of his own death. He ſays, *he gives his fleſh for the life of the world.* And *that he gives his life a ranſom for many*, comp. *John* vi. chap. Matth. xx. 28. And the phraſe St. *Paul* has thus put, 1 *Tim.* ii. 6. *who gave his life a ranſom for all.* And farther, *Jeſus* himſelf teaches concerning his mediation, that he is appointed of the Father *to raiſe the dead*, and to become *the reſurrection and the life.* As the Father hath *life in himſelf*, ſo hath he *given* to the Son to have *Life in himſelf*; and has given him power *to raiſe the dead*; ay; *all* the dead. See *John* v. from 21--30. comp. ch. xi. 25. In a word, Jeſus has taught no other doctrine concerning his own death, that gives us the reaſon of it, but that it is the appointed way to his becoming the reſurrection and life to the human family.

And the *reaſon* will appear not only from the *analogy* that St. *Paul* has obſerved between the one offence of one man, and death reigning by one;

one ; and the one act of obedience of one man, and juſtification of life taking place in conſequence thereof, *Rom.* v. 15--20. but it farther appears from this conſideration, *viz.*

REAS. II. God made man, at firſt, by his *word*, the *Logos*, and put him upon trial ; in which ſtate he ſuffered *death* to take place : it ſeems therefore perfectly conſiſtent with infinite wiſdom, that the ſame *word*, the *Logos*, ſhould take fleſh, in order to explain and open the divine purpoſe with regard to the *recovery* of men from the grave. By this, a *perſonal dominion* over death is aſcertained, in him who is ſaid to be the Reſurrection and the Life! and this, in the character of a *reſtoring head.* An earneſt of *it* was given, in conſequence of his own reſurrection, in *the many bodies of the ſaints which aroſe, and appeared to many in Jeruſalem*, Matth. xxvii. 52, 53. And by many *antecedent* acts of power which he exerted, equal to raiſing the dead, during his perſonal miniſtry ; and by the communicating of equal powers to his apoſtles and miniſters after his aſcenſion ; which proofs of his capacity, and of the great deſign of his miſſion, are inconteſtibly ſtrong and convincing.

REAS. III. Neither is there any thing in the doctrine of Chriſt's death, as it lies in the revelation, but what is worthy of *all acceptation!* It is perfectly well adapted to the embrace and approbation

approbation of *all men*. And that it is not the univerſal mean of light and knowledge, is becauſe men have not been content with the *plainneſs* of the doctrine; but have made it a *myſtical*, *incredible* thing, and ſo quite unworthy the acceptation of any reaſonable man. But as it is in the New Teſtament, it is a doctrine worthy the acceptation of *all* men, as men of all nations and ages have had ſome glimmerings of hope, that this *preſent*, is not the beſt and moſt perfect condition and ſtate of human exiſtence. But ſince ages are run off without any recovery of the ſlumbering generations of men to life, it was worthy the wiſdom of God, to appoint this opening of life and of immortality in the *laſt* ages of the world, that men might have an aſſurance that God is not ſlack concerning his promiſe; nor will he ceaſe to be the God of *Abraham*, of *Iſaac*, and of *Jacob*.

The *reaſon* of the death of Chriſt, appears then to be the dominion which death has aſſerted over the whole human family.

If it ſhould be aſked, why could not the death of *holy men*, *prophets*, and *inſtructors* of mankind, who bore teſtimony to truth *by their blood*, why could not theſe bear a ſufficient teſtimony?--*Jeſus* ſhall make the reply in parable, *Matth.* xxi. 33 to the end, comp. *Mar.* xii. 1--12. alſo *Matth.* xii. 38--46. where he deſcribeth God as ſending his ſervants which men treated ill, and deſtroyed, and at laſt *his*

ſon.---And in order that the death of Chriſt might become a *propitiation* or an *atonement* to the minds of men, it was needful that his *filiation* ſhould appear, that God ſhould bear witneſs to him, as *his ſon*, in the moſt *peculiar* ſenſe: foraſmuch as ſome *inſtrument* ſeems as requiſite to be employed to raiſe man from the dead, as to form or make him at firſt, from his original nothing, or of the duſt! And it would not have given ſo much ſatisfaction to the minds of men, if this high honour of aſſerting dominion over death and the grave, ſhould have been conferred on *any one* of the human race, a mere man, born in the run of ordinary generation.--Nor would it have been *free* from perplexing enquiries, had it been an *angel*; that is, on the ſuppoſition that the revelation had informed us of *numbers* of theſe. We ſhould have been for aſking, why this angel? what has he done? why not another?

Which, at once ſhews, the *reaſonableneſs* of Chriſt's being the appointed head of life, and *reſtorer* of it, as we diſcern it was in conſequence of a ſcene of the moſt divine behaviour, which expreſſed obedience, and unfailing piety even unto the death--and the whole undertaken from a moſt *refined benevolence*, or an *unparallelled compaſſion* to a race of creatures, under the dominion of death; and by the moſt exalted character! the *ſon of God!*

REAS. IV. This will add a farther reaſon for the death of Chriſt, as it repreſents the *juſtice* of the divine Government, in ſubjecting the human family to death; ſince he could admit of the death, of not only the *innocent*, but even of a perfectly virtuous character: nay, could ſuffer him to undergo the moſt painful death, as it was connected with the moſt exalted glory! ſo that men may learn, in the treatment of Jeſus, that *virtue* is the way to happineſs, and that death ſhall not be able to cut off, or ſeparate from the final poſſeſſion of it. The difference between him and the human family, lay, in its being impoſſible that the pains of death ſhould hold *him*, any longer than the *nuchthemeron*, the *part* of three days and nights, determin'd by prophecy. Whereas *death* will hold all thoſe men on whom it has ſeized, excepting thoſe who were the trophies of his perſonal reſurrection, till the ſeaſon appointed for the coming of Chriſt, and the general reſurrection, that *redemption* of the body. The reaſon why they, the *many* aroſe, was in fulfilment of *prophecy*, John v. 25. *the hour is coming and now is, that the dead ſhall hear the voice of the ſon of God.* Comp. ver. 28, as referring to the general reſurrection: For the hour is comin which *ALL that are in their grave, ſhall hear his voice*; which ſeems to intimate, that he ſpoke before of the number of the dead that ſhould riſe, as witneſſes at his own reſurrection.

And their *rising* was a testimony to men, of Christ's rising in character of the resurrection and the life, to the human-world.

Reas. V. The *reason* of Christ's death becoming requisite to his putting on the character of the restoring, recovering head of the children of men, is, in that his resurrection from the dead, by the power of God, gives the fullest assurance to men that can be given of his *divine-mission*.--It would not have proved his divine character, that he was raised from the dead, *merely* on account of his unspotted holiness, or his most consummate virtue; unless it had been a *truth* that he was appointed of the Father *to raise the dead* This doctrine he had taught of himself, and that his death, and his resurrection from the dead on the third day, should take place, in *confirmation* of the truth of this very doctrine. But it was impossible that he should have thus risen from the dead, and should have given such evidence of his exaltation, that followed his resurrection, if this had not been a *true* doctrine which he taught concerning himself. The testimony of *divine-power* would have been given to a LIE! which is repugnant to the known perfections of Deity.

Reas. VI. *Besides*, by his *real* death, or his actually *resigning his spirit into the hands of God*, whilst on the cross, his resurrection could only take place from the *energy* of God, to whom

whom he had committed his ſpirit: and therefore, there is ſuch a degree of vigour and force in the evidence, that muſt eternally afford a *reaſon* of the event! which way ſoever we view the death of Chriſt, conſidered as an event in which man is concerned, we may perceive the *wiſdom* and *goodneſs* of God in the Appointment.

REAS. VII. God's raiſing Jeſus from the dead, and giving him glory, was, that *our faith and hope might be in God*, 1 Pet. i. 21. This is a *finiſhed reaſon* of the death of Chriſt! for as our reſurrection from the dead, depends on the promiſe of God, and refers to a very future ſeaſon, ſo, inaſmuch as God has raiſed up Chriſt from the dead, and given him glory, in conſequence of his aſſuring men that he will himſelf raiſe *all* the dead; ſo it is a ground or reaſon of our *faith* in God, with regard to the truth of the doctrine, and our *hope* of reaping the benefit of it, in God's own time. And this has *great emphaſis* laid upon it throughout the New Teſtament writings. See again, *John* vi. 33. "the bread of God, is he who cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world, ver. 40. And this is the Father's will that ſent me, that every one who ſeeth the ſon, and believeth on him, may have everlaſting life; and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day.--I will come again, and receive you to myſelf, that where I am, ye

ye may be alſo, *John* xiv. 3. Ye believe in God, believe alſo in me, ver. 1."--So that faith in God, will expreſs itſelf, in the moſt becoming manner, among ſuch who are privileged with the Goſpel, in believing on the meſſage of his ſon. And thus, he that believeth on the ſon hath eternal life, *i. e.* he has the doctrine of eternal life, in the ſtrongeſt point of light, in his doctrine, *John* iii. 36. or, by believing that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the ſon of God, men have life thro' his name, *i. e.* through the power and authority which God has given him to reſtore men to life, *John* xx. 31. *But theſe are written, that ye might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt the ſon of God, and that believing, ye might have life thro' his name.* This is the *end* for which the Goſpel was written, or committed to writing. And an *end* worthy of God, and worthy the regard of all men, to whom the *written Goſpel* is vouchſafed.

Here I might remark upon the trifling objection of ſome, who have pretended, "that "Jeſus Chriſt never ordered or appointed that "his Goſpel ſhould be committed to writing." Whereas the intereſt of all men, is manifeſtly concerned in it; nothing leſs than men's having *life* in his name! which is an argument of the fitneſs of its being committed to writing; a *reaſon* that no other hiſtory in the world can boaſt.

The advantage then of the doctrine of Chriſt's death, is to confirm our *faith* in God, as a Being that will *juſtify* and *ſave* men, by recovering them from death. For this is the complete

view

view of men's *juſtification*, who have ſo believed in the doctrine of his ſon, the reſurrection and the life, as to conform to the doctrine of his death.

§ VII. This brings us to conſider, upon what *foundation* or *reaſon* Chriſt is to confer life. That he will raiſe *all* men from the dead, is the doctrine of the Goſpel. But then, the conſequences of ſuch reſurrection will not be *univerſally beneficial*; "thoſe that have done good "unto the reſurrection of life; and thoſe that "have done evil unto the reſurrection of damnation." *John* v. 29. comp. 2 *Cor.* v. 10.

It follows, that *doing good*, will be the qualification for life, and for the avoidance of the *ſecond death*; and *doing evil* will be attended with damnation, or with the loſs of life. The *death of Chriſt* then conſidered as *a ranſom for all*, reaches no farther than the recovering to life *all* the dead, in order to their final judgment: but thoſe only can receive the benefit of ſuch reſurrection who have *behaved well*, and worthy the ſeveral diſpenſations of God towards them. This view of Chriſt's death ſecures the glory of God's moral government; *juſtifies* him in the admiſſion of death to reign for a ſeaſon over all men; and, at the ſame time, recommends the obligation to moral rectitude in the moſt forcible manner.

And to this purpoſe, whenever the apoſtles

mention the death of Chriſt, they uſe it to enforce obedience to God ; either by repreſenting the *good will* of God towards men recommended by it, or the obligation this lays men under to holineſs and virtue. Should I go about to prove this, I muſt recite the main doctrine of all the Epiſtles. I will only mention one paſſage as a ſample, 1 *Pet.* ii. 24. *who his own ſelf bore our ſins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to ſin, ſhould live to righteouſneſs.*

If any regard is had to the Context, we ſhall perceive, that the apoſtle had juſt been exhorting *Chriſtian ſervants* or *vaſſals*, who had infidel maſters, to expreſs reverence to the *froward*, as well as to the good, under their buffetings ; and he urges the example of *Jeſus*, who had been moſt cruelly uſed by the *Jewiſh Nation*, of which *Peter*, and thoſe to whom he wrote made a part ; and therefore he ſays, *who his own ſelf bare OUR ſins.*

§ VIII. But ſhould it be ſaid, that many ſtrong paſſages mention the death of Chriſt as tho' it was ſomething *vicarious*, or in the place of man, or in his ſtead ; that he perſonally bore our ſins, and had our iniquities charged upon him : to this I would endeavour a plain and full anſwer.

1.) We ſhould, I am perſuaded, carefully obſerve, that no ſuch ſort of doctrine is to be found

found in the *Gospels*; wherein we might expect to have found it, had it been a doctrine belonging to the death of Christ.---There is indeed one passage, where an allusion is had to prophecy, *Is.* liii. 4. and what the prophet says, of a great person, the Messiah's *bearing our griefs, and carrying our sorrows*, the historian *Matthew*, understands of Jesus's *removing* the maladies and grievances of men, see *Matth.* viii. 16, 17. and he calls it a *fulfilment* of the prophecy. If then, we may conclude any thing from the authority of this Evangelist, we may safely understand all such allusions to prophecy, or to sacrifice, that intimate Christ's bearing our sins in his own body, to signify his removing those *evils*, that our present condition of being is exposed unto. For will any say, that he became sick himself, or received the infection of distemper, or was possessed of devils, when the historian says, that in accomplishment of the prophecy, *himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses?* --- comp. 1 *Pet.* ii. 24.---by his *stripe* we are healed, as in consequence of *our following his steps*, ver. 21. and thus *are restored from our wanderings*, ver. 25. --- *God's laying upon him the iniquity of us all*, can intend no such thing, as imputing the *crime* or *demerit* of our sin: but his appointing him, to remove death from all; and every such evil, at present as may promote the good of mankind, and advance the cause of moral truth. The prophetic expression of *laying upon him the iniquity of*

us all, if applied to Jesus, from *Is.* liii. 6. must be understood in such a sense as St. *Matthew* has understood his *taking our infirmities and bearing our sicknesses.*

To suppose the death of Christ as *vicarious*, or as in the place of man, is absurd, because his death was not under the appointment of man. Nor could any man, or all men, have performed the office: For the death of Christ was to be the mean of restoring life to all men. But any *vicarious* person, is in the place, to do the office, and to do it under the appointment of that other whose *vicar*, or *substitute* he is. And to suppose God to appoint his death as *vicarious*, is the same absurdity; because this would suppose God's placing that thing in the stead of another thing, between which there is no resemblance in capacity.--but by his death he is to remove the death of all men; therefore it cannot be vicarious. The *death of Christ* does not appear to have been *vicarious*, in this view, for the *death of man*, as expressed in the *sentence*, implies in it his *seeing corruption*, or returning to his *original dust*, which God's holy one was not suffered to do, *Acts* ii. 27. Neither could Christ's death be *vicarious*, as it has not at all prevented the execution of the sentence, but *all* die, and return to their dust, and see corruption! even the most sincere and faithful disciples and followers of this Jesus do so! The *death of Christ* cannot then be *vicarious*, or in the place of man; as it does not prevent the

the death of men; but must be considered, as only the *qualification* of Jesus, exhibiting to men, and marking out his capacity to raise the dead, or proving his designation for the office: for *he was delivered through or by the offences of men, and raised again for their justification*; or, to give an earnest of their rising from the dead, that final justification of all good men; who, till then, lie under the *wages*, or *demerit* of sin, see *Rom.* iv. 25.

The death of Christ does not appear to have been *vicarious*, with respect to the *moral character* that it exhibited: for tho' it evidenced that he was perfectly free from sin, as it was a *free-will* offering of himself, in perfect confidence on the *power* and *veracity* of his father, and in full assurance that the pains and throws of death could not hold him, but *that it would make known to him the ways of life*, Acts ii. 28. and in consequence of prophecy, *was made necessary to his entrance on his glory*, Luke xxiv. 26. Yet, his *death* does not procure a freedom from sin, in any of the children of men; no, not in the best Christians, 1 *John* i. 8, 10. but nevertheless, his death condemns sin in the flesh, shews the evil of transgression, as it was made needful in the appointment of God, to recover men from under the dominion of death, which dominion took place by reason of sin. And this, the whole constitution of sacrifices under the Law of Moses could not do. So I understand, *Rom.* viii. 3. *For what the law could not do, in*

that it was weak thro' the flesh, God sending his own son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. His *death* does indeed demand that men should die unto sin, and live unto God. In that he died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, 1 *Pet.* iii. 18. or, he died, rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living, *Rom.* xiv. 9. And it would be a *base* and *blasphemous* thought, to imagine the death of Christ *vicarious*, as relative to God; or, that he was God's *substitute* in dying for us; forasmuch as it is impossible that the Deity can be exposed to any passion or suffering.--He is for ever incapable of any passion, as he is unchangeably perfect.

To suppose God could look upon Christ as a sinner, or as chargeable with any sin of others, is a manifest contradiction of his truth, and of the perfection of his nature: so far is it from being any *satisfaction* to his justice, or any *vindication* of the honour of his laws!---For if God could charge *demerit of sin* upon an innocent and virtuous person, *Truth*, or the reason of things would be violated! and if we suppose God *falsifying* truth, his creatures can be under no moral obligation, from either his *example*, or *authority*. This seems to be the unavoidable consequence of men's supposing God, the God of truth, *imputing*, *putting*, or *charging* the demerit of men's sin to the account of Jesus.

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The *Gospels*, on the contrary, ever describe God's bearing testimony to him, as his obedient, well-beloved son, in whom he was always well pleased; which he could not be, if he could ever regard him as a sinner, or as chargeable with the *demerit* of sin; unless, we can suppose him *well-pleased* with *sin*; and delighting to inflict the *demerit* of it, upon the most obedient and holy of his Creation.

§ IX. Or could we suppose that Christ *personally* bore our sins, and was chargeable with the sin of the whole world; it would render the great doctrine of the Gospel a *vain* and useless thing, namely, *repentance towards God.*--- Of what, and for what, should men express *repentance*, and *remorse of mind*, if the sin of the world is imputed or reckoned, in the sight of God, to the account of Jesus?-- It is enough that they can, contrary to reason and eternal truth, look upon Christ as chargeable with all their transgressions! No law should henceforth restrain them; no rules of moral conduct oblige them; but they should take the comfort of laying all their guilt upon Jesus, or take the consolation that God has done it! This I can scarce write down without trembling, tho' it is no *strange* doctrine, much less a *new* one. But could the doctrine of Christ's death be more horridly perverted by men or devils?

Repentance has no reasonable foundation, if God has or can impute our sins to the charge of

of Chriſt, or inflict upon him the demerit of them.

§ X. It is ſaid, *Gal.* iii. 10, 11. *that as many as are of the works of the law are under the curſe: for it is written, curſed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is juſtified by the law in the ſight of God,* it is evident; for the juſt *by faith ſhall live.* comp. *Rom.* i. 17. iv. 15. iii. 20, 21. And hence, it has been ſuppoſed by ſome, that by the ſcheme of the goſpel, men, who pretend to juſtification as the reſult of perſonal obedience, are under a *curſe.*

The ſenſe of theſe, and other like paſſages, cannot intend, in the leaſt, to relax man's regard to the obedience of the moral law, which is eternal. For this would be to contradict the truth of things, as well as the expreſs declaration of Jeſus, ſee § III. They can only intend, that immoral men, who ſought for *juſtification of life,* from the ſacrifices and offerings of the Moſaic Law, as full atonement for ſin, or as the ſecurity of future life, were under a *curſe,* as the very offerings were themſelves confeſſions of guilt. And the letter of the law pronounced a curſe on all ſuch *who did not continue in all things,* &c. *Deut.* xxvii. 26. *who did not confirm the words of that law, by doing them.* But the apoſtle ſays, ver. 9. in that third chap. of his Epiſtle to the *Gal. That they which are*

faith, are bleſſed with faithful Abraham. If then, the *Iſraelites*, under the Moſaic Law, departed from Abraham's faith, and expected to be juſtified in virtue of their ſacrifices, tho' they *continued not* to do the works of the law, they were curſed by the very letter of the law.-- For as *Abraham*'s faith juſtified him, only as it led him to every act of obedience to the divine will, ſo it was impoſſible, that his poſterity could be juſtified by neglecting moral obligation, and truſting to their ſacrifices and atonements. Thoſe *works of the law*, would leave them under a curſe: foraſmuch as they could not be inſtituted of God, in order to his diſpenſing with the letter of that law which he had given them; *the juſt by faith ſhall live.*

No man can look into the words of the law, in the xxviith of *Deut.* from the 15 to 26 ver. and then declare, that men could be juſtified by ſacrifice, or even by the mercy of God, who did not confirm the words of that law to do them, unleſs he can ſuppoſe that God could juſtify *idolaters*; or *diſobedient and rebellious children*; or ſuch *as removed their neighbour's land-mark*; or *who made the blind to wander*; or ſuch, who *lay with their father's wives*; or *thoſe who lay with beaſts!* &c. So that *works* oppoſed to *faith*, muſt, in the language of the apoſtle, intend ſuch as ſuperſeded a regard to moral obligation, which a faith in God, that is a juſtifying faith, will ever imply in it. But the *Jewiſh* Nation had manifeſtly gone into a

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vile and *baſe* ſubſtitution of offering and *ſacrifice*, in the place of *judgment*, *mercy* and *faith*, ſee *Matth.* xxiii. 23.---They had excluded that faith in God, which juſtifies only as it is attended with *judgment*, or *juſtice*, and *mercy*.

This view of the *Jewiſh Nation*, will give a key to the underſtanding of St. *Paul*, when he oppoſes *works* to *faith*, in bar of men's juſtification. *As many as are of the works of the law, are under a curſe.*

It muſt then be a truth, that as faith in Abraham, leading him to conſtant obedience to moral obligation, was imputed to him for righteouſneſs: ſo faith in him who raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, in like manner influencing our obedience, will be imputed to us for righteouſneſs. See the argument, *Rom.* iv. 16. to the end.

Or, may we not underſtand, *as many as are of the works of the law, to be under a curſe*, to be ſuch only who do *thoſe works* which the law condemneth, *viz. idolaters*, *rebellious children*, *murderers*, and *adulterers*; in which ſenſe the apoſtle muſt be underſtood, 1 *Tim.* i. 9. *the law is not made for* [againſt] *a righteous man, but for the lawleſs and diſobedient; for the ungodly and for ſinners*, &c. But the law cannot put under a curſe, men who conform to it; or upright and righteous men, and ſuch there are, or elſe the apoſtle cannot be underſtood, comp. *Rom.* iv. 15.

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The Law *curſed* none but wicked men. Even the Moſaic edition of it; for it *bleſſed* them that were *righteous*, *merciful* and *holy*. It muſt then intend, that thoſe only were *curſed* who were wicked, and who expected that ſacrifices and offerings would atone for their guilt. And the moral law muſt ever remain the *rule of right* or of *juſtification* to men, whether they enjoy the Goſpel or not, comp. *Rom.* ii. 13. with *Rom.* iii. 26. Tit. ii. 14. iii. 8.

But as the Moſaic Edition provided no meaſure of atoning, or removing the *curſe* of the law from ſuch who had incurred the curſe; the doctrine of the Goſpel promiſeth *pardon* and *life*, even to theſe if they become penitent. See 1 *Cor.* vi. 9, 10, 11. *Tit.* iii. 3, 4, 5.---if they return to their obedience and become perſonally *righteous*, who before were *unrighteous*.

§ XI. But Chriſt is ſaid to be made a *curſe* for us, *Gal.* iii. 13.

How is this? Truly no more than as in the language of the law, every one was *curſed* that hung on a tree. See *Deut.* xxi. 22, 23.--For he that is hanged, is accurſed of God, or *the curſe of God*.--But then, it muſt be a man who had committed ſin worthy of ſuch a death. And theſe were the *blaſphemers* and *idolaters*, whom, after they had ſtoned, the Jews hung up, not on a living tree, but on a piece of dead timber, faſtened in the earth. Inſtances we have, *Numb.* xxv. 4. and probably *Achan*,

Josh. vii. 25. *Josh.* viii. 29. and others.---But does it hence follow, that Christ, because of his death, was made of God *a curse*, in any such sense? Could he abhor him as a blasphemer or an idolater? It is impious and blasphemous to suppose it! How then was he made a curse for us? ὑπερ ὑμων καταρα. Methinks the *prepositition* may be rendered, *upon*, or *over*. So it seems to signify when it governs the same case as it does *here*; see 1 *Cor.* xv. 29. else why are they then baptized, *for*, *over*, or *upon* the dead? The reasoning of St. *Paul* would lead one to such a rendring in this place, *being* made a curse *over*, or *upon* us :--that the *blessing* of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, thro' Christ Jesus.--Here, the *blessing* is put as the produce of Christ's being made a *curse*. And how is this, but by the guilt of his death being revenged on the Jewish Nation? which this apostle has largely insisted upon, in the ixth, xth and xith chapters of his Epistle to Romans.

It is certain, he could not be *accursed* of God,--or made a *curse* of God, any farther than God permitted him to undergo the most ignominious death, which the *Law* had appointed for the greatest malefactors. And altho' wicked men treated him as *accursed*;--*smitten* and *forsaken* of God, and *afflicted*; notwithstanding this was the sense of the Jewish Nation, in fulfilment of the prophecy, see *Is.* liii. 4. yet it would ill-become men, who would judge according

cording to truth, to look upon him in any ſuch light: as eaſily could God ceaſe to be God, as he could treat his only begotten ſon, or his well-beloved-ſon, as an *out-caſt*, or an *accurſed* thing! It diſcovered the amazing patience, and adoreable forbearance of God, that he ſuffered a nation thus to treat the moſt amiable and divine character that ever appeared in it. And eventually the *curſe* of God came upon the Jewiſh nation, for their ſin and infidelity; and by its *deſtruction*, the evidence of the truth of the Goſpel, was made illuſtrious to the Gentile nations.

And yet, as under the Law, without *ſhedding of blood there was no remiſſion*, Heb. ix. 22. ſo Chriſt was once offered to bear the ſins of many, ver. 28. And the *blood of Jeſus Chriſt* is ſaid to cleanſe us from all ſin, 1 *John* i. 7. and he is the *propitiation* for our ſins, ch. ii. 2.

§ XII. Should we attend with accuracy to the Moſaic inſtitution of ſacrifices, we ſhall be able to diſcern, that they, as an external homage, were an open profeſſion of refuge, which the penitent took in the *mercy* of God.--And at the yearly expiation, the high-prieſt ſtood in the holy of holies, where the *mercy-ſeat* was placed, with the blood of the ſacrifices of the whole people, and without ſhedding of blood, they had no promiſe of remiſſion. The death of Chriſt therefore did *more* than anſwer to theſe ſhadowy repreſentations, ſince by virtue

of it, he entred the heavens, as the Reſtorer of life to the whole human family; and by that one ſacrifice for ever perfecteth all who are holy.

His blood then *cleanſeth from ſin*, as in conſequence of it, he deſtroys *death*, makes its dominion void,--His blood *cleanſeth from all ſin*; as it enables him to remove the laſt *marks of ſin*, that remain on the human family: and ſo is he ſaid, *Heb.* ix. to appear the ſecond time, *without ſin*, i. e. any marks of mortality in himſelf, and by removing all mortal ſymptoms from every of the pious dead, *without ſin*, death, *unto ſalvation*, Heb. ix. 28.

Thus he becomes the propitiatory, or mercy-ſeat, thro' faith in his blood, as we diſcern the compaſs of the divine-rectitudes, including the moſt certain proſpects of men's deliverance from death. This is the *remiſſion*, or *looſening* from the bands of death, by which men are held, *Rom.* iii. 15, 16. [παρεσις] the term rendred *remiſſion* here, ſignifies *relaxing* or *looſening* from chains or bands.

§ XIII. That the doctrine of Chriſt's death, or of his blood, can extend no farther, than a diſplay of the *good-will* of God to Men, in not imputing to them their treſpaſſes; but removing death from all men who are penitent and pious; the above obſervations are intended to ſet forth.---Not that the author of theſe remarks

remarks pretends to be infallibly right; but will ever be open to conviction, and thankful for any farther light. He doubts not, but all who have any intereſt in *myſtery*, will load this *Eſſay* with reproaches;--and that great Numbers of pious and good people, who have long imagined, that there is ſomething in the death of Chriſt, that is a ſort of *atonement*, *price* or *ſatisfaction* paid to Deity, on account of which man is admitted to the Hope of life; that theſe will have ſome prejudices againſt this Eſſay. But,

To theſe he freely ſays, that he cannot perceive an *atonement* made to God by the death of Jeſus: but he can conceive of it as an atonement made to the conſciences of men; as it gives them the *moſt reconciling* proſpects of future being! And he would farther obſerve, that tho' we are ſaid *to be bought with a price*, 1 *Cor.* vi. 20. vii. 23. yet, we are not to conſider this figurative, alluſive manner of ſpeech, as literally true; but to intend the obligation that the death of Jeſus lays Chriſtian-men under, even as much as can be conceived from the moſt *beneficial contract* that we could have made. The *price*, if conſidered as paid to God, has no ſenſe in it; becauſe we are ſaid at the ſame time to be purchaſed FOR him. *Ye are bought with a price*; *therefore glorify God with your body*, *and your ſpirit*, *which* are *God's*; his unalienable property. The *price* cannot be paid

paid to the *devil*, or to him that hath the power of death! This ſuppoſition would be ſhocking---it follows, that as nothing that Chriſt, or any being could do, could poſſibly give the Deity any farther right than he ever had to us; ſo the expreſſion can only intend, that the death of Chriſt opens to us a farther view of the eternal demands of divine love and mercy! and was ſo far from making God *more propitious*, or giving to him any *new* and freſh claims upon us, that it only *manifeſted* the *grace* and *love* of the Father, which had ever been invariably the ſame; and which now openly confirms and eſtabliſhes the *promiſes* of mercy.

It will therefore be no diſagreeable thing, to pious men, if they can perceive that the *Author* has been endeavouring to remove the rubbiſh, and diſſipate the clouds that have been thrown on the doctrine of Chriſt's death. And tho' he ſhou'd have miſtaken the ſcheme, they who think he has been honeſt, will allow that he has a right to better information. And as to thoſe who think ſo, and are able to correct his errors or miſtakes, he is perſuaded, that not only himſelf, but the intereſts of religion, make a demand of ſuch information.

Finally, if his reaſoning ſhould prove juſt and concluſive, then the doctrine of *redemption*, or of the *atonement*, is an important doctrine,

as

as he has ſhewn it to be a *plain, eaſy, intelligible* one. For this is a firſt principle with him, that every doctrine muſt be plain, in proportion to its uſe and importance.

May the God of truth protect *and* proſper *this undertaking, ſo far as it is calculated to promote the truth, as it is in Jeſus. So prays the Author.*

FINIS.